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# The Pioneer

By

A. S. MERCER



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# **THE PIONEER**





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**By  
A. S. Mercer**



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# **THE PIONEER**



**Lovingly dedicated to  
the Pioneers, their  
children and children's  
children withersoever  
dispersed around the  
globe, by the author.**



## Preface

USHERED into the lap and nourished from the breast of a Pioneer Mother, it is but natural that I should have imparted into my being strong sympathies for the pioneers. As a little tot I sat in a circle around the yule log fire on Christmas Eve when the pioneers of the neighborhood were gathered and listened to the stories of the hardships, endurance and by vicissitudes of the early pathfinders. The Indian Chief Shabona, the white man's friend, with his tribe still tarried in our vicinity and he was a frequent visitor at my father's house. During all of my earlier years my chief associations were with the pioneers who were domiciled

around. In fact, with the exception of a few years spent at school my entire life has been associated almost continually with these heroic characters. I have studied them from the tangent of every possible arc of their life circle. I ought to know them—and I do from Alpha to Omega. The picture that I have drawn in the following pages of these heroic characters is not a fiction nor a fancy, but one of real personalities. The pioneer was not the product of any particular section of the country. Latitudinal and longitudinal lines cut no figure in their development. The southern, the middle and northern zones stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific all knew them and recognized their sterling qualities. They were the same individuals wherever found, their thoughts,



impulses and actions the same. At this time there are but few of them left, generally they have crossed the great divide and their spirits have found their way and they are seated high up in that "house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens." In the United States there are practically left no fields for the pioneer to conquer. He has blazed the way to every section and millions have followed him to happy homes, but his children are left who should point with pride to their forbears, and treasure lovingly remembrances of them.

I am proud to be able to give to the world a true and honest description of these wonderful individuals. The acknowledgment of their worth comes late, but people will appreciate it even now.

**BOOKS IN PREPARATION BY COL.  
A. S. MERGER**

**Reason and Instinct**

This will be a book of two hundred and odd pages. It will demonstrate beyond any question of doubt that our so called dumb animals and wild beasts have the same reasoning capacity that boastful men possess. A lifetime's experience has given unnumbered examples showing clear demonstrations of rashness if not philosophy. These stories will not be borrowed from newspaper reports, but will be recitals of things really seen.

Will probably be on the market the first of the coming year, and should be a welcome visitor to every house throughout the land. Price, \$1.50.

### **Rhythms From the Log of the Duphuny Club**

This will be a book of four hundred or more pages. It will consist of a little philosophy, a good deal of landscape word painting; actual experiences and true stories of frontier life. There will be some pictures founded on facts and a few instances where the imagination will be given full sway. Will be on the market about May 1, 1914. Price, \$2.00.

## **“THE PIONEER”**

**By Col. A. S. Mercer**

**T**HE word “pioneer” opens up an endless chain of thought and sheds a halo over our land from ocean to ocean. Scarce a league of terra firma, from the sun-kissed shores of the southern seas where the orange yellows on the tree, the grape purples on the vine and nature delivers her stores with open hand, to the frozen north where only the lichen clings to the rocks as a pledge that the laws of production have not been repealed, but has thrilled at the tread of this matchless forerunner of civilization.

The branches of the trees of the primeval forests of the Atlantic seacoast bowed to the pioneer as he approached, with rifle

and axe, with a welcome as sweet as a maiden's kiss.

As he advanced, the prairies this side of the Alleghenys covered themselves with red, yellow and purple blooms as a greeting and a promise.

The great American desert, stretching from the Missouri to the Rockies — the backbone of the continent — forbidding as it was to the average man, held out tokens to this dauntless spirit and bade him not despair.

Then the mountains raised their heads across his pathway for thousands of miles, robed in white and skirted with green. Each towering peak that kissed the sky and each spring that bubbled up and trickled down over moss covered rocks,

meandering midst evergreen shrubs and ferns, were veritable sign manuals to seal the invitation to come and rest in their shade and drink of their limped waters.

Once the summits of the Rockies were scaled a panoramic view was spread before the wondering eyes, illimitable, brown and sear, yet withal entrancing. Desert gloom was there, but pine-clad hills and grassy knolls lifted their heads as signs that all was not bad.

Last came the slopes of the Pacific, their giant trees, verdure clothed hills and sunny vales laughing in glee and warbling joyous notes of welcome to him who dared approach.

Who was and is this pioneer who came forth to spy out the land? He was the

gift of the creator. A man who loved his fellow men. A man every pulsation of whose heart was sympathetic.

That restless spirit that gave up the sweet caresses of loved ones near and dear; that broke away from friendships lifelong; that threw aside the treasures and allurements of developed and organized society and, taking his life in his hands, boldly marched out into wild and unknown regions, was actuated by some motive higher than the love of adventure or the lust for personal renown.

Analyzed from the standpoint of his life on the frontier the conclusion is irresistible that there were two underlying motives that governed his actions and determined his life work. First, he loved his race and

desired to get out from under the influence of the rapidly spreading idea and practice, crystallized in the modern expression "do your neighbor before he does you." He believed in the brotherhood of man. That kindness and benevolence to that brother should be the rule—not the exception. Seeing everywhere about him the converse of this, he grew nervous and longed to change his environments.

Second, there is a subtle influence that surrounds us all, weak in some, strong in others, which stimulates a desire to go forth and do something different from the conventional and in harmony with natural laws. What is the source of this desire comparatively few understand and fewer still stop to consider. The truth is that it is a part of the Divine plan.



Away back in the early days of our genealogy the command went forth from the Creator "Go ye out into the world and subdue it." With the command came the moving spirit, the longing to "go out" and do our part in the great work of subduing nature—making it contribute to the wants and necessities of him who was created in the image and after the likeness of God. Looking down the ages we discover this as a more or less active characteristic of the human race from the time of the first wrestling match in the garden — when Adam shirked and cast all the blame on the woman — even down to the present day.

Thus we have before us the pioneer unmasked. He stands there the exponent of love, faith and honor — a holy trinity.

Love the cornerstone, faith the superstructure, and honor the polar star that even guides and controls. Search the annals of every frontier settlement from Plymouth Rock to the golden sands of the Pacific and the records will show that every latch-string hung on the outside. That such as he had freely he gave unto all comers; that welcome, the sweetest word in all languages, save love, was written in big letters above the door, blazoned on every approach and beamed from the face and eyes of every member of the household. That no sorrow laden individual ever came without receiving the fullest measure of sympathy and comfort. That each one helped and sought the good of his neighbors as conscientiously as he sought his own — that the helping hand was ever out-

stretched to all. That in case of sickness there was ever a watcher at the bedside administering without money and without price. When the pale horse stalked into their midst, loving neighborly hands closed the eyes, fashioned the shroud, dug the grave, made the coffin and tenderly laid the form away in the dust of which it was made, to sleep the last sleep and rest from toil and pain. Generally there was no minister to lead the exercises and some neighbor, perhaps uneducated in the choice of words, dropped the sprig of acacia in the open grave as a symbol of the faith that though gone from earth the loved one still lives; said a few plain words that came from the heart, unalloyed; repeated the Lord's prayer he had learned to lisp at his mother's knee, and bowed,

uncovered, in the presence of death and the assembled mourners.

These records prove the unimpeachable honor, as well as the loving manliness of the pioneer. His word was his bond, his law and gospel. No written bond in double the sum, with the pound of flesh as penalty, was given or required. To question one's word was to impugn his honor, and trouble followed. Unfettered by statutory enactments, free as the wind that swept o'er mountain and plain — the free-man whom the truth made free — his actions were shaped and controlled by an innate consciousness of right, which, being in harmony with the convictions of his neighbors, formed an unwritten law as binding as the sentence of the highest

court and as unalterable as the statutes of the Medes and Persians, or the laws of nature that hold the stars in place.

There seems to be a general disposition among right thinking people to accept the Ben Adhim idea of love of fellow men as a close approximation to real Christianity. The little poem by Leigh Hunt entitled "Abou Ben Adhim" illustrates very clearly the kind of men who made up the list of pioneers: "They loved their fellow men."



**About Ben Adhim and the Angel**

About Ben Adhim, may his tribe increase,  
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,  
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,  
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,  
An Angel, writing in a book of gold:—  
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhim bold,  
And to the presence in the room he said,  
“What writest thou?”—The vision raised its  
    head,  
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,  
Answered, “The names of those who love the  
    Lord.”  
“And is mine one ” said Abou, “Nay, not so,”  
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
But cheerily still; and said, “I pray thee, then,  
Write me as one who loves his fellow men.”  
The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night  
It came again with a great wakening light,  
And showed the names whom love of God had  
    blessed,  
And lo: Ben Adhim’s name led all the rest.

The pioneer was not always a scholar, but he was always a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. He was a diamond in the rough, perhaps as a rule, but occasionally he was found possessing the polish and learning of the collegiate. This I discovered to my amazement in the spring of 1861 on the beach of Puget Sound, a few days after my arrival in that sunset land. Strolling by the water's edge, sniffing the invigorating salt air and revelling in the magnificent view of the Olympian range of mountains fifty miles across the blue waters and green forests bordering Admiralty Inlet, suddenly I came upon a middle aged man shaving and shaping ox yokes under the shade of a bower house on the sea-girt shore. Arrayed in pants and shirt carrying all of the

patchwork colors of Joseph's celebrated coat, I accosted him as an old timer and among other inquiries asked as to the healthfulness of the country. This was his answer: "It is generally supposed that the constant inhalation of an aqueous atmosphere is deleterious to the lungs, but my experience here fails to verify the opinion." Here was a sentence not only correct but one in which the most exact terms were employed and the fewest possible number of words used to express the desired meaning. Naturally I sought his further acquaintance and learned that he was a college bred man who had "gone out into the world to help subdue it" and was a true soldier in the frontier battalion.

Such experiences as this were not uncommon — in truth, the pioneer averages



up a good deal higher in intelligence and resourcefulness than does the average portion of the human race, taken as a whole.

As confirmatory of the statement that the true pioneer was always a willing helper, I may give some further personal experience. When I located in Seattle in the spring of 1861, there was less than one hundred people in the town and about half that number in the surrounding country settlements. Everyone was pleased to see a newcomer and especially so if he had come with a family. On his arrival, if he desired to take up land, and become a farmer, some one was appointed to show him the vacant claims. Having made his selection, the preacher, the doctor, the pedagogue, the merchant and half a score of others, with axes, saws, frows, etc., all car-

rying a lunch, accompanied the stranger on foot or by canoe — as there were no horses and wagons — to his claim, and before nightfall there was completed a commodious cabin, clapboard roof, puncheon floor and a door with wooden hinges, the latchstring of rawhide left hanging on the “outside.”

This was not the exception but the rule for many years and the practice prevailed from the rock-bound coast of the Atlantic away to the pebbly beach of the Pacific.

The hardships, sufferings and endurance of the pioneer never have been and never can be fully told. They mark the darkest, most sublime, yet from a historic standpoint the brightest page in American history. It was one constant battle to the death, notwithstanding the rainbow prom-

ises held up to lure him on. Words are inadequate. The marvelous descriptive powers of a Victor Hugo and the magnetic speech of an Edward Everett are as pale as moonbeams to the searching rays of a mid-day sun on Sahara's desert sands in their weakness to draw the picture of this hero of horses in his westward, conquering march.

We of today ride in our carriages over macadamized roads at our leisure, or fly across the continent in palace cars on business or pleasure bent, admiring the beautiful homes that line our way, and going into ecstasies of delight at the panoramic views of mountain, plain and gorge without a thought of him who led the way. But for this courageous individual such things could not be.

But for the pioneer who fought his way step by step amidst vicissitudes and perils great, across the Alleghenies, the black diamonds of Pittsburgh would still lie buried in their earthy fastness; her hundred hills covered with residence and business palaces would still be clothed in nature's garb; her millions upon millions of annual products be unknown in commercial marts.

But for this same pioneer, who literally waded the swamps of western Ohio and Indiana, reeking as they were with malaria and smelling of death, Lake Michigan would be a veritable dead sea save for the fish that swim in its waters and the wild fowl that wing their passage o'er its surface. Chicago, the marvel of all people, and of all ages, would have no existence — its countless arteries of trade that

lead toward the setting sun would never have been vitalized.

The great west, home of millions of free, fearless people, would today be inhabited by only the beasts of the forest and plain, and the red man, still untutored, carrying the tomahawk and scalping knife. The great hope and uplifter of the race — free homes — would have failed to do its work.

Let us go for a moment with this pioneer as he ventures forth. In the early days of the western pilgrimages the wife and babe in arms rode the one horse belonging to the family. The husband and father leading the way on foot with gun and hunting knife and loaded down with parched corn and blankets. If there were

older children they followed in single file, as there were no roads, not even a trail.

Trusting in God and his unerring aim, he crossed over mountain and plain, picking his way through forests dense, wading streams and camping where the shades of evening fell upon his pathway. In this manner — the sun by day and the milky way by night, his chart and compass — hundreds of miles were traversed, every foot of his route bordered by wild beasts and the lurking foe of the paleface — the painted red man.

The quality of men and women who dared the hardships of pioneer life, physically, mentally and morally was such as to leave an imprint upon the future that time cannot destroy. Not only were they

pure in mind and heart, with a loving-kindness as sweet as that emanating from the garden of Gethsemane, but they possessed undying energy and courage unsurpassed in ancient or modern warfare.

The pioneer came, not like an army with banners, buoyed by the concord of sweet sounds from string and wind instruments and the touch of shoulder to shoulder as they marched, sweeping all before them; but in groups of twos and three treading their way through trackless woods and over burning sands, passing at myriad points the bleaching bones of those who have essayed to pass before them. These white landmarks, glittering in the noon-day sun are the milestones of our western civilization, at every one of which should be erected an altar, built of shining gran-

ite, decorated with precious stones and bedewed with the breath and tears of millions of heart offerings at the sacred shrines.

Realizing the early conditions and studying the character of the men and women who accepted them, still forging ahead into the unknown, we are enabled to arrive at a fair estimate of the sterling mettle of their descendants and picture in our mind's eye what their influence is to be in the molding of opinions and the control of the land they captured and peopled.

Thus through all the pathless realms came our forbears, planting the seeds of an aftermath that was to grow into shapely man and womanhood and form an imperial part in shaping the destinies of a great nation.



Following closely behind these outriders and seed planters of a permanent and healthy civilization came the second crop, men and women fashioned largely after their forerunners, filled with hope, purity of purpose and endowed with sublime courage. This was the era of the Prairie Schooner, lovingly and faithfully described by Gertrude Ray, of Carrolton, Ohio, under the caption of the

### **Empire Ship**

I have sung my songs to the stately ships

That are sailing the seven seas,

But today I sing of a cruder craft that

Laughed at the lulling breeze.

Of the Prairie Schooner quaint and slow,

With its dim and dusty sails,

A phantom ship of the long ago,

Adrift in the grass grown trails.

Westward ho. Westward ho.

Out where the winds are sweet and low,  
And the grassy cradles swing and sway,  
The Star of Empire takes its way.  
Westward ho.

Ere the bellowing steed of steel and steam  
Had startled the sleeping deer ;  
Where the curlew whistled its timid call  
To the gray goose nesting near,  
Through the fair fresh prairies, hushed and  
hid

Where the wild wolf made her den,  
There came this land-launched schooner  
Manned by bronzed and brawny men.

Westward ho. Westward ho.

Out where the bold brisk breezes blow,  
And a young world walks in the fields  
of May.

The Star of Empire takes its way.

Westward ho.

And in that marvelous ship that sailed  
To the shores of the wondrous west,

Was a mother who caroled a song of joy  
To the babe at her happy breast ;  
And stowed away in the good ship's hold  
Were a book and a plow and a pen,  
And a sickle and seeds—yea, all God needs  
For the making of matchless men,  
Westward ho. Westward ho.  
Out where the golden harvests glow,  
And the builders are building day by day,  
The Star of Empire takes it way.  
Westward ho.

These “phantom ships” set their courses to every point of the compass and after stormy passages anchored on the broad plains of the trans-Missouri, in the mountains, valleys and on the slopes of the Pacific. Their wakes were veritable trails of blood, but the heroic sailors forming the crews of these scattered sails stood to their guns, and, notwithstanding their thinned

ranks, finally conquered a lasting peace that opened up the vast and golden west to the on-coming home-seeker.

History will repeat the story of the Meeker massacre, the Custer extermination and a few of the more noted encounters with the savage tribes, but who will chronic the thousands upon thousands of minor conflicts where single individuals or entire families gave their lives — left their bodies as feasts for the wolves and their bones to whiten and crumble on the sun scorched plains in their struggle for homes?

Who will tell the story to future generations of the heartaches, the long vigils kept and the nervous strain of those pioneer mothers in their lonely cabins, while the

father was absent in search for meat to fill the empty larder or on the quarterly trip to the distant trading post for needed supplies and the letters from the loved ones in far away lands?

Who will tell the story of the hardships endured, the great labor performed in the planting and building up of the homes scattered over an area thousands of miles square with no roads, no markets, no supply stores and often no money? An unconquered but willing nature was the source of supply and a strong arm the only key by which the storehouse was to be unlocked.

Through all of these troubles the pioneer has passed and the country is now full or rapidly filling with an ambitious

people. The church stands on the hill; the little red school house nestles by the roadside and the home with all that the word implies, is everywhere in evidence and a generous prosperity marks the present era.

As indicated in the last line of the little poem repeated, we are "growing matchless men," yea, and peerless women, whose patriotic inspirations will encircle the earth and live until time shall be no more.

That the east recognizes the splendid character of our western grown men, perhaps could not be more clearly shown or more aptly illustrated in few words than by relating the following incident:

Some thirty years ago a very distinguished and greatly loved Mayor of Bos-

ton made a trip to the then west, spending some weeks mixing with the people. Returning to his home of noted culture his friends gave him a public reception. Being asked his opinion of the men with whom he had broken bread in the outlying districts he said: "The western man is simply a yankee enlarged."

And why should he not be a yankee enlarged? He comes of stock that, like gold, has passed through a furnace seven times heated and purged of its dross. His ideals are formed from a study of his ancestry and of necessity are high. As long as he keeps in mind the crowning characteristics of that line from which he springs, so long will he be a power against which the combined assaults of modern anti-democratic influence will beat in vain. Hence the im-

portance of placing the pioneer in his true light before the present and future generations, that all may know and appreciate his sturdy manhood, unswerving rectitude and loyalty to the simple forms of free government.

Then to the pioneer let us say: "Ave atque vale"—hail and farewell. You came as the trusted agent of the Lord. You have done your work and soon the world will know you no more forever. Search the records of all time and nowhere will be found a class of braver, more noble men, nor a class who have accomplished so much for their race, or left such enduring monuments to personal worth and honor. One by one as they have passed to that upper realm their spirits have winged their way to that glorious Valhalla



where none but heroes find entrance.  
Again let us say: "Ave atque vale"—  
hail and farewell.

Hark. Hearest thou that soft soothing sound? It comes from the echoless shore.  
" 'Tis the flutter of angels' wings as they gather from their heavenly mansions with expectant look and beaming spirits; the voices of sweet, loving mothers who have gone before and patiently awaited the coming of their sons; the pattering of little children's feet as they run o'er the golden street to the pearly portal. From the great white throne issues the command: Open ye the gate.

Ah, who comes there? Not the military chieftain with his martial tread and glittering sword, pointing to a million

dead on sundry battlefields as his proud record and merit card of admission; not the king upon whose vassals the sun never went down and who comes with coach and six, and tassellated outriders; not the distinguished citizen who dressed in purple and fine linen and sat in the high places. No, none of these, but the pioneer, weary of step but with the consciousness of work well done shining in his eyes.

Again a voice from the great white throne: "Let him enter. He was the true and loyal pathfinder. He raised no brazen serpent by the roadside, but he hung the starry flag of hope on the hill-top, in the vale and the glen. His candle was ever lighted and millions have followed him to happy homes. His foot-

steps, though oft leading o'er burning sands and cactus plains, through forests dense that teemed with countless foes; o'er craggy peaks and hanging rocks, always pointed the way to a land of final peace and happiness. His heart was always right; his motives pure. Come now to thy recompense."





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